

## CLAIMS

1. A method for computer-assisted deletion of electronic messages, comprising:

5        searching content of an outgoing electronic message for date information;

         including an expiration date to be sent in addition to said content, said expiration date being related to said date information from said content of said electronic message; and

10       sending said outgoing electronic message and said expiration date to a recipient.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said searching action is performed on a user-entered portion of said electronic message.

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3. The method of claim 1, wherein said searching action is performed on an attachment to said user-entered portion of said electronic message.

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4. The method of claim 1, wherein said expiration date is appended to said electronic message.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein said expiration date is inserted into said message.

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6. The method of claim 1, additionally comprising said recipient receiving said outgoing message and deleting said outgoing message after said expiration date.

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7. The method of claim 1, additionally comprising prompting a sender of said outgoing message with said suggested expiration date.

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8. The method of claim 7, additionally comprising receiving a confirmation that a sender of said outgoing message accepts said expiration date.

5 9. A method for the computer-assisted deletion of an electronic message in a computer that receives said electronic message, comprising:

searching said received electronic message for a date, said date being present within the content of said received electronic message;

10 prompting a user with a suggested expiration date for said received electronic message; and

deleting said received electronic message after said suggested expiration date has passed.

15 10. The method of claim 9, further comprising a receiving computer user accepting said expiration date for said received electronic message.

20 11. The method of claim 9, wherein said searching further comprises searching a portion of said received electronic message that has been input by the sender of said electronic message.

12. The method of claim 9, wherein said searching further comprises searching at attachment to said received electronic message.

25 13. The method of claim 9, wherein said expiration date is offset from said date by a predetermined amount.

14. A system for the computer-assisted deletion of date-sensitive messages in an electronic messaging program, comprising:

an input device that conveys inputs from a user to a processing unit;

30 an electronic messaging program that runs on said processing unit, said electronic messaging program allowing the user to construct electronic messages based on inputs from said input device; and

an auto-searching module that searches within said electronic message for date information, said auto-searching module also suggesting an expiration date of said electronic message based on said date information.

5           15. The system of claim 14, wherein said electronic messaging program also allows said user to include an attachment in said electronic message, and wherein said auto-searching module additionally searches within said attachment for said date information.

10           16. The system of claim 17, wherein said input device is a keyboard.

17. A system for the computer-assisted deletion of date-sensitive messages in an electronic messaging program, comprising:

15           an electronic messaging program that runs on a processing unit, said electronic messaging program receiving electronic messages from a sender; and

            an auto-searching module that searches said electronic messages for date information, said auto-searching module suggesting an expiration date based on said date information.

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            18. The system of claim 17, wherein said auto-searching module additionally stores a second electronic message if said second electronic message includes an expiration date that has been accepted by the sender of said second electronic message.

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            19. The system of claim 17, wherein said processing unit deletes said electronic message after said expiration date has passed.

30           20. The system of claim 17, wherein said auto-searching module searches for date information within an attachment included within said electronic message.

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